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Department of State

TELEGRAM

EXCISE

SECRET 870

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ACTION EA-13

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 NSC-1 NSCE-00 INR-05 CIAE-00 NSAE-00

PM-03 DDDE-00 PRS-01 (RSR-01) RSC-01 /049 W
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R 140949Z SEP 71
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9905
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
CINCPAC
AMCONSUL DANANG
USOEL FRANCE
AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

SECRET SAIGON 14747

LINDBS ACFORN

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

SUBJECT: ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNIST INTENTIONS TOWARD THE
GVN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

SAIGON 12592 pol 14 Viet 5

SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH CONCRETE EVIDENCE OF COMMUNIST
TACTICS TOWARD THE NEW ELECTORAL SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM
IS STILL SCANTY, THE COMMUNISTS CLEARLY REGARD THE PRESENT
CONJUNCTURE OF EVENTS AS RIPE FOR EXPLOITATION. THEY WILL
PROBABLY CONCENTRATE ON POLITICAL EFFORTS, HOPING TO
ESCALATE DISCONTENT, GAIN CONVERTS, AND UNDERMINE FURTHER
THE REPUTATION OF THE GVN. SECONDARILY THE COMMUNISTS
MAY USE MILITARY ATTACKS AND TERRORISM TO DISCREDIT THIEU'S
LEADERSHIP AND HURT MORALE. BECAUSE OF THEIR LIMITED
POTENTIAL TO EXPLOIT THE SITUATION FOR MAJOR IMMEDIATE
GAIN, AND BARRING AN UNEXPECTED OPPORTUNITY ARISING FROM
SERIOUS POLITICAL DISTURBANCES, THE COMMUNISTS WILL PROBABLY
DIRECT THEIR MAIN EFFORT TO PREPARING THE GROUND FOR LONG-
TERM ADVANTAGE RATHER THAN SHORT-TERM SUCCESS. END SUMMARY.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

REVIEWED BY James J. Gable DATE 1/26/82

PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

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3. PREMIER PHAM VAN DONG IN HIS DRV NATIONAL DAY SPEECH SEPTEMBER 2 EXPLICITLY CALLED FOR POLITICAL AGITATION WITHIN GVN-CONTROLLED TERRITORY TO EXPLOIT THE ELECTION SITUATION (SEE SAIGON 14492). ¹ REPORTS SUGGEST THAT THE COMMUNISTS EXPECT MAJOR POLITICAL TURMOIL, INCLUDING POSSIBLY A COUP D'ETAT OR AT LEAST REPRESSIVE ACT BY TRIED TO CONTROL THE OPPOSITION.

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4. THOUGH DOWNPLAYED, MILITARY ACTIVITY AND PHYSICALLY

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DISRUPTIVE ACTS WILL NOT BE IGNORED. THE COMMUNISTS COULD USE SUCH TACTICS TO FURTHER THEIR BASICALLY POLITICAL AIM IN THREE WAYS: (A) IN RURAL REGIONS WHERE THIEU'S CONTROL OF THE VOTE PRECLUDES SIGNIFICANT POLITICALLY-INDUCED BOYCOTTING, SOME VOTERS MIGHT BE TERRORIZED INTO STAYING HOME ON ELECTION DAY THROUGH DISRUPTIVE ACTS; (B) EXPOSED ARVN UNITS CAN BE ATTACKED WITH THE AIM OF DISCREDITING THIEU'S LEADERSHIP; (C) IF MAJOR POLITICAL DISRUPTION OCCUR BEFORE OR AFTER THE ELECTION, THE COMMUNISTS MIGHT TRY HEAVY MILITARY ATTACKS TO AGGRAVATE THE SITUATION

HOWEVER, THE COMMUNISTS WILL NO DOUBT BEAR IN MIND THAT ANY LARGE-SCALE MILITARY ACTION RUNS THE RISK OF INADVERTENTLY STRENGTHENING THIEU'S HAND BY SHOWING THE EVER-PRESENT COMMUNIST THREAT. THE PRESENT DEVASTATING FLOODS IN NORTH VIETNAM MAY ALSO HINDER ANY PLANS TO LAUNCH MAJOR MILITARY ATTACKS (THOUGH THE EFFECT OF THESE FLOODS ON HANOI'S WAR-EFFORT REMAINS UNCLEAR).

REGARDLESS OF THEIR MIX OF TACTICS, HANOI AND THE VC CAN BE EXPECTED TO USE THE PROPAGANDA WEAPON TO THE HILT, DENYING THE OCTOBER 3 ELECTION AS A SHAM AND PLAYING UP ANY DISTURBANCES THAT OCCUR. THIS CAMPAIGN WILL BE AIMED AT BOTH SOUTH VIETNAM AND WORLD PUBLIC OPINION.

THE MAIN OBJECTIVE OF THE COMMUNISTS WILL BE MORE TO BUILD A LONG TERM ADVANTAGE RATHER THAN TO ACHIEVE QUICK RESULTS. THOUGH THE LATTER GOAL WILL NOT BE REJECTED IF AN OPPORTUNITY PRESENTS ITSELF, AND FOR MORALE PURPOSES THEY MAY ATTEMPT EXHORT THEIR CADRES TO EXPECT EARLY VICTORIES.

REALISTICALLY THEY MUST SEE THEIR CHANCES OF TOPPLING THIEU AND THE GVN IN ANY IMMEDIATE UPSURGE AS BEING POOR. BUT BY SEIZING THIS OPPORTUNITY TO HAMMER AWAY AT THE POLITICAL BASE AND INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION OF THE RVN AND BY PROSELYTIZING ADDITIONAL CONVERTS, THEY HOPE TO LAY THE FOUNDATION FOR FUTURE DECISIVE ACTION.

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